

***In the City Council, June 21st, in the Year Two Thousand and Eighteen***

Upon the recommendation of Councilor Alisa F. Klein, Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra, and Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge

**R-18.128**

**A RESOLUTION**

**CALLING FOR AN END TO THE SEPARATION OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN FROM THEIR PARENTS**

- Whereas, the Department of Homeland Security announced that in the six-week period between April 19, 2018 and May 31, 2018, it has separated 1,995 immigrant children from their parents at the southern U.S. border<sup>1</sup>, with many thousands more separated before that period and since<sup>2</sup>; and
- Whereas, this current practice by the United States government of ICE and Border Patrol agents separating children from their parents and families with no government mechanism for reuniting them is immoral, abhorrent, cruel, and inhumane; and
- Whereas, the children who have been separated from their parents are being held in deplorable conditions, sometimes in cages and with bottled water and bags of potato chips as their only sustenance<sup>3</sup>; and
- Whereas, this practice is causing immigrant parents to live in terror of having their children torn from them and their children to live in terror of being separated from their families in such a manner; and
- Whereas, separating children from their families is condemned throughout the world as a crime against children and constitutes a form of torture for both the children and their parents; and
- Whereas, the practice of separating immigrant children from their parents has been deemed “government-sponsored child abuse” by Dr. Colleen Kraft, the president of the American Academy of Pediatrics<sup>4</sup>; and
- Whereas, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad al-Hussein, has called for an immediate halt to this practice, stating that “The thought that

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<sup>1</sup> Timm, J.C. & Seitz-Wald, A. (18 June, 2018). All four living former first ladies condemn Trump border policy. *NBC News Online*. Downloaded from: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/laura-bush-separating-families-border-cruel-immoral-n884136>

<sup>2</sup> Timmons, H. (15 June, 2018). After taking their kids, the US gives detained immigrant parents this useless toll-free number. *Quartz*. Downloaded from <https://qz.com/1304507/ice-gives-immigrant-parents-this-phone-number-to-find-detained-children/>

<sup>3</sup> Arnold, A. (18 June, 2018). What to know about the detention centers for immigrant children along the U.S.-Mexico border. *The Cut*. Downloaded from: <https://www.thecut.com/2018/06/immigrant-children-detention-center-separated-parents.html>

<sup>4</sup> Wise, J. (18 June, 2018). American Academy of Pediatrics president: Trump family separation policy is child abuse. *The Hill*. Downloaded from: <http://thehill.com/latino/392790-american-academy-of-pediatrics-president-trumps-family-separation-policy-is-child>

any state would seek to deter parents by inflicting such abuse on children is unconscionable<sup>5</sup>,” and

Whereas, religious leaders representing diverse faiths have issued a joint statement condemning this practice saying, “Tearing children away from parents who have made a dangerous journey to provide a safe and sufficient life for them is unnecessarily cruel and detrimental to the well-being of parents and children<sup>6</sup>,” and

Whereas, the separation of children from their parents can serve as a lifelong trauma and can be permanently debilitating, with this kind of trauma being linked to serious mental, physical, and community health issues such as acute and posttraumatic stress disorder, harmful drug and alcohol use, depression, anxiety, suicidality, and higher mortality rates; and

Whereas, trauma of this nature lasts not just throughout these children’s and parents’ lifetimes but into the lives of successive generations, as we see from horrifying historical precedents such as during slavery in the United States, the Trail of Tears, and the concentration and death camps of the Holocaust; and

Whereas, the Trump administration is accelerating the aggressive criminalization and prosecution of the parents of these children who are, in many cases, facing up to 20 years in prison for “illegal entry,” and

Whereas, the federally-sponsored immigration raids that target these parents and children in their homes, at work, and in their neighborhoods are conducted without respect for civil and constitutional rights.<sup>7</sup>

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of Northampton, Massachusetts calls for an immediate end to the current federal policy of separating immigrant children from their parents and families.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council of Northampton, Massachusetts calls for bipartisan support for the urgent passage of U.S. Senate Bill S.3036, the “Keep Families Together Act.”<sup>8</sup> Introduced by Senator Dianne Feinstein and co-sponsored by Massachusetts Senators Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey, S.3036 prohibits the separation of children from

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<sup>5</sup> Cumming-Bruce, N. (18 June, 2018). U.N. Rights Chief Tells U.S. to Stop Taking Migrant Children From Parents. *The New York Times*. Downloaded from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/18/world/europe/trump-migrant-children-un.html>

<sup>6</sup> Council of Bishops, The United Methodist Church (7 June, 2018). *Faith leaders’ statement on family separation*. Downloaded from: [http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/faith-leaders-statement-on-family-separation?mkt\\_tok=eyJpIjoiWVRVMlI6RTVNRGt5T0RSbSIsInQiOiJpUk2piZndEcZLRDZuRnVjVFNmY3RQUGdlUzFIVUdHcFlmQVRBb1hVb1RhS1wvT25jYTdrTGhMazNDMGxcL3lCbVBLTTNUSjV0Q25tVFUxODRPZ0tBPT0ifQ%3D%3D](http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/faith-leaders-statement-on-family-separation?mkt_tok=eyJpIjoiWVRVMlI6RTVNRGt5T0RSbSIsInQiOiJpUk2piZndEcZLRDZuRnVjVFNmY3RQUGdlUzFIVUdHcFlmQVRBb1hVb1RhS1wvT25jYTdrTGhMazNDMGxcL3lCbVBLTTNUSjV0Q25tVFUxODRPZ0tBPT0ifQ%3D%3D)

<sup>7</sup> González, J. (17 June, 2018). How to stop child separation? *Truthout*. Downloaded from <https://truthout.org/articles/how-to-stop-child-separation-stop-sending-their-parents-to-prison/>

<sup>8</sup>[https://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/8/7/8757edf1-4c26-44ad-be6d-3e62b4875d59/8E980D047182BB87CF73EEAD252B3F78.keeping-families-together-act.pdf](https://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/8/7/8757edf1-4c26-44ad-be6d-3e62b4875d59/8E980D047182BB87CF73EEAD252B3F78.keeping-families-together-act.pdf)

their guardians unless “danger of abuse or neglect at the hands of the parent or legal guardian” can be proven through multiple, evidence-based and trauma-informed steps that safeguard “a strong presumption in favor of family unity.”

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council of Northampton, Massachusetts calls for federal immigration policy that is guided by humane and carefully considered laws that help protect the people who come to the United States seeking asylum and relief.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Administrative Assistant to the City Council shall cause a copy of this resolution to be sent to President Donald Trump, United States Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, United States Attorney General Jefferson Sessions, U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, U.S. Senator Ed Markey, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, Congressman James McGovern, and MA Governor Charles Baker.